

Frequently Asked Questions Pertaining to the FLCIS/OSCAR Merger

Updated – March 7, 2008

The Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts and the OSCAR Committee are excited to announce that the functionalities of the Federal Law Clerk Information System (“FLCIS”) will be merged into OSCAR Version 4 for the next hiring season. What does this mean? OSCAR will become the single centralized resource for notice of available clerkships, clerkship application information, and law clerk employment information. The FLCIS will cease to exist as a separate system. Judges will be able to indicate whether they are not hiring or, if they are hiring, whether they wish to receive applications electronically or in hard copy.

Technical details are still being developed and will be announced as they are finalized. Answers to anticipated questions are below. We wanted to provide at least preliminary notice now so that everyone can plan accordingly. Thank you in advance for your patience with this complicated merger. We hope that it amounts to a big step forward in streamlining information about clerkship positions.

Paper Applications

Q: Is this the end of paper applications?

A: No, judges still may choose to receive clerkship applications in paper form. They may use the new version of OSCAR simply to advertise their clerkship positions and specify that they wish to receive applications in paper rather than electronic form. Even judges who will not have clerkship positions open are encouraged to use OSCAR to communicate that fact so that they avoid receiving unwanted applications. The goal of the merger is simply to consolidate information and staffing.

Comprehensiveness of New Site

Q: Will every federal judge be included?

A: All federal judges will be listed initially at least by court and name, but they will retain the freedom to decide whether or not to post clerkship information. For those judges who do not post clerkship information, a notation of “no information available” will be displayed. Law schools should please encourage eligible judges to post information in the system. Because of different administrative structures, the U.S. Tax Court, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces, and the U.S. Supreme Court never have been included in the FLCIS or OSCAR, and that will not change in the immediate future.

- Q: How will the OSCAR/FLCIS merger affect a judge's ability to post his or her clerkship hiring information?
- A: Although the format may look a bit different, all judges will have the same ability to post clerkship information in the new system as they did in the FLCIS. They will list the basic information such as the term of the clerkship, the period during which they want applications, the method of delivery (electronic or paper), and specific hiring criteria. They will also have a comment box to explain preferences or additional requirements. No distinction will be made between "paper" and "electronic" judges, other than the fact that "electronic" judges will have a link for the online application (like the OSCAR link in FLCIS) and, as in past years, those online applications from third-year students will be made available on September 3, 2008.

Effective Date

- Q: When will the merger take effect?
- A: With the launch of the next version of OSCAR, currently scheduled for Monday, May 5. Judges will receive their annual prompt to enter their information. The big difference this year will be that all the judges – including those who do not wish to receive applications at all, those who wish to receive applications in paper form, and those who wish to receive applications electronically – will have a place in OSCAR to post clerkship information. Another difference is that all categories of users – judges, law school administrators, applicants, and recommenders – will be able to access the new version of OSCAR simultaneously on the launch date of Monday, May 5, without significant downtime for the transition. Consequently, law school administrators and applicants should not consider postings they see on May 5 to be comprehensive, as judges may need several days or even weeks thereafter to post their information.

FLCIS in the Meantime

- Q: What happens to the FLCIS in the meantime – will it be shut down before the new version of OSCAR is launched?
- A: Notice of the upcoming transition will be posted on the FLCIS soon. On Friday, May 2, the FLCIS will be shut down, and the FLCIS web address automatically will redirect users to the OSCAR web address.

Transfer of Clerkship Postings

- Q: Will clerkship postings existing in the FLCIS get transferred automatically into OSCAR or will judges have to reenter their information manually (such that some information could be lost)?
- A: Because information in the two systems will have slightly different technical structures, automatic transfer is not possible. Judges who previously entered information in the FLCIS will need to enter that information again in the new version of OSCAR. However, the OSCAR program staff will try to capture data in the FLCIS immediately before the effective date of the merger, compare it to data subsequently entered in the new version of OSCAR, and offer assistance to judges who are identified as missing information in OSCAR.

General Information on FLCIS

- Q: Aside from the specific clerkship listings, will the general information on the FLCIS (such as “About the U.S. Courts,” “Qualifications, Salaries, and Benefits,” etc.) be included in the new version of OSCAR?
- A: Yes, that is the current intent. If you feel strongly that any of this general information should or should not be included in the new version of OSCAR, please share your thoughts with any of the NALP OSCAR work group members listed below.

Datafile of Judges’ Addresses

- Q: Will the new OSCAR continue to allow schools secure access to judges’ addresses in a downloadable format, for importing into their own internal databases?
- A: Yes. We hope that the format will not even change. If the format does need to change, schools will receive as much advance notice as possible so that they can reconfigure their internal databases as needed. Due to security concerns, OSCAR will not provide judges’ addresses in a downloadable format to applicants directly.

More Information

Q: How can I get more information?

A: More information will be announced as it is available. Please do not contact the OSCAR program staff with questions about this merger as they will be busy answering questions from judges. Instead, we welcome you to contact any of the NALP OSCAR work group members:

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